

## Social Situation Analysis During The Pandemic Outbreak In The Novel *The Stand* By Stephen King

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the social situation during the flu-influenza pandemic in the novel "The Stand" by Stephen King. Researchers completed the data for this study using descriptive qualitative analysis techniques. The data collection in this article is the novel "The Stand" and secondary data are internet resources and journals and the technique of collecting data using note-taking. The technique analysis data used an objective approach to examine how literary works relate to the current (real-time) context. The method of analysis involves looking for patterns of behavior, changes in social norms, and individual responses to uncertainty and health threats. The results revealed that the pandemic outbreak catalyzed significant social change in the novel, giving rise to new power dynamics, competition, and collaboration among survivor groups. The results of this study illustrate the Influenza flu pandemic that almost claimed the entire population in the world and how those who are still alive survived until this pandemic problem is over, face loneliness, despair, belief (religion), and responsibility. This article also provides deep insights into how authors use fiction to reflect and depict social situations during health crises. The implications of these findings may provide further understanding of the complexity of human interactions during difficult times and create awareness of the importance of solidarity and adaptation in the face of global challenges.

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### BACKGROUND

Literature is a creative work that reflects the author's intentions and goals. A literary work contains ideas and systems of mind, not just ideas, theories, or other systems of thought (Gisworld, 2013). In other words, a literary work encompasses a variety of concepts, hypotheses, and cognitive processes. These elements originate from the writers, who significantly utilize imaginative ideas presented in their works. In their definition of literature, Roberts and Jacobs (2006:2) said, "Literature is a composition that tells a story, dramatizes a situation, expresses emotions, analyzes and advocates ideas." In their book *Introduction to Literature and Literary Criticism*, Ade and Okunoye (2008:2) provide many definitions of literature from Moody (1987), Boulton (1980), and Rees (1973). According to Moody (1987), literature originates from our love of telling stories, neatly organizing words, and expressing words from various facets of the human experience. According to Boulton (1980), literature is an imaginative work that provides the four R's: recreation or entertainment, introduction or recognition, revelation and redemption, or

disclosure and release. According to Rees (1973), after defining literature, Rees comes to the conclusion that literature is a way to permanently communicate one's thoughts and feelings about life and the universe.

A novel works do not just appear without any reason but are based on the ideology, thoughts, and facts of the author's life and the environment around him. This research discusses how the social situation in the novel "The Stand" during an influenza pandemic was developed as a biological weapon in a secret laboratory of the US Department of Defense in northern California. The Stand tells the story of a highly contagious and deadly pandemic strain of influenza developed as a biological weapon in a secret US Department of Defense laboratory in northern California. In the past, influenza was a global pandemic that affected everyone. This novel mentions a deadly pandemic, influenza or "superflu", spreading quickly to all countries and almost killing the entire world population. Estimated 99.4% fatal. This virus accidentally spread because security guard Charles Campion fled, knowing the laboratory would be locked. He wanted to take his family away from the area. After a few days, his car broke down at a gas station in Arnette, Texas. Bystanders and ambulance workers are infected by the dying Campion and his deceased wife and child. The United States Army tried to isolate Arnette, even executing civilians who tried to escape, but to no avail; the virus, named "superflu" or "Captain Trips," spread across the country. The government then asked its agents to unknowingly spread the virus in the Soviet Union, its satellite countries, and China to guarantee their destruction. Faced with various challenges, loneliness, and despair amid a pandemic that has claimed many of the closest victims, to choose between a bright life or a dark life.

This article examines the social situation during the pandemic (Influenza flu) that almost claimed the entire population in the world, about how those who are still alive to survive until this pandemic problem is over face loneliness, despair, belief (religion), and responsibility. The latest review from this article is a study of the description of the outbreak pandemic in the novel the stand by Stephen King which is also connected to social situations where this topic has never been discussed in more depth in this novel.

## **METHODS**

Types of the research in this paper is descriptive qualitative. The data obtained is in the form of words, and according to Bogdan and Biklen in Sugiyono (2010:21), a qualitative descriptive method is utilized to evaluate and interpret the data. not numbers, but images. With this approach, Stephen King's "The Stand" novel's societal context is intended to be described. The researchers used descriptive techniques to collect data. The data collection objects are primary data: novel

"The Stand" and secondary data: Internet resources and journals. The object of this research was the novel *The Stand* by Stephen King. This novel consists of 78 chapters and 1.152 pages. It was published by Doubleday, New York, in 1978. The descriptive qualitative method of data analysis was employed in this study, and the researchers used an objective approach to examine how literary works relate to the current (real-time) context.

## DISCUSSION

Stephen King describes how the social situation that occurred during the pandemic hit the country in the novel *The Stand*. The following is the social situation during the pandemic.

### 1. Pandemic Influenza

A pandemic is a widespread and simultaneous outbreak of a disease affecting a large geographical area (an entire country/continent). In other words, everyone in the world is now facing this disease as a common problem. For example, the COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS pandemics. In the past, influenza was a global pandemic that affected everyone.

*"They are the symptoms of the common cold, of influenza, of pneumonia. We can cure all of those things, Nick. Unless the patient is very young or very old, or perhaps already weakened by a previous illness, antibiotics will knock them out. But not this. It comes on the patient quickly or slowly. It doesn't seem to matter. Nothing helps. The thing escalates, backs up, escalates again; debilitation increases; the swelling gets worse; finally, death."* (Stephen King, p. 170).

As in this novel, it mentions about a very deadly pandemic influenza or "superflu", spreading quickly to all countries and almost killing the entire world population. It is uncertain who can survive until who ends up dying.

This quoted explain about the influenza virus referred to in this novel is the common cold virus and can be cured easily. However, in fact the disease is capable of killing anyone who gets the disease, especially those who are susceptible to the disease. The novel refers to the influenza virus as the common cold virus, emphasizing its ease of cure. According to the quote, the virus depicted in the narrative is synonymous with the common cold and is portrayed as readily treatable. The statement elaborates on the idea that the influenza virus in the story is specifically identified as the common cold virus, suggesting that a straightforward cure is available. The mentioned quote underscores that the novel characterizes the influenza virus it portrays as akin to the common cold, emphasizing the simplicity with which it can be remedied.

*"... a great nation such as this must do. We cannot afford to jump at shadows like small children in a dark room; but neither can we afford to take this serious outbreak of influenza lightly. My fellow Americans, I urge you to stay at home. If you feel ill, stay in bed, take aspirin, and drink plenty of clear liquids. Be confident that you will feel better in a week at most. Let me repeat what I said at the*

*beginning of my talk to you this evening: There is no truth —no truth—to the rumor that this strain of flu is fatal. In the greatest majority of cases, the person afflicted can expect to be up and around and feeling fine within a week. Further—” (Stephen King, p. 249).*

Here's a quote that says this influenza epidemic cannot be taken lightly, because it can claim the lives of sufferers. In America, during the pandemic they were encouraged to stay at home, get enough rest, drink lots of fluids, and hope to be healthy and back to normal within a week.

The influenza virus cannot be underestimated because it is dangerous. Therefore the government urges people to stay at home, not to socialize outside because this virus is deadly, especially for people who are susceptible to disease so that it does not become an epidemic or a sudden increase in disease incidence when the number of cases exceeds normal predictions for a certain location or period of time.

*”David had died in 1913, of an influenza not so very different from this one, which had wiped out so many. In 1916, when she had been thirty-four, she had married Henry Hardesty, a black farmer from Wheeler County up north.” (Stephen King, p. 519).*

This quote explain that influenza is a common disease, like the previous quote which states that one cannot take influenza lightly, because in the quote below, in the novel it is stated that Henry Hardesty, the character in the novel *The Stand* died because of this influenza disease, and influenza when he returned to attack and annihilate so many people in America at that time.

Increases in cases of influenza illness can occur in small, localized population groups or in thousands of people across continents. So this disease can certainly destroy so many people.

*“—have we ever been a party to the clandestine manufacture of substances outlawed by the Geneva Convention. This is a moderately serious outbreak of influenza, no more and no less. We have reports tonight of outbreaks in a score of other countries, including Russia and Red China. Therefore we ask you to remain calm and secure in the knowledge that late this week or early next, a flu vaccine will be available for those not already on the mend. National Guardsmen have been called out in some areas to protect the populace against hooligans, vandals, and scare-mongers, but there is absolutely no truth to the rumors that some cities have been „occupied” by regular army forces or that the news has been managed. My fellow Americans, this is a flat-out falsehood, and I want to brand it as such right here and ...”(Stephen King, p. 249)*

The quote explains that influenza is not only in America, but has spread to various countries, including Russia and China. However, reassured that there will be a vaccine for this flu, and the National Guard will help protect the community from rebels and distributors of fake news or information.

Naturally, the government offers an influenza vaccination to combat the virus and advises the populace to maintain their composure while they wait for the influenza vaccine, often known as the flu shot, which protects people from influenza. Because the influenza virus evolves swiftly, vaccines are created twice a year. While they vary in effectiveness from season to season, the majority offer excellent protection against influenza.

*“Bubonic plague the black death decimated Europe near the end of the fourteenth. Whooping cough near the end of the seventeenth, and the first known outbreaks of influenza near the end of the nineteenth. We’ve become so used to the idea of the flu—it seems almost like the common cold to us, doesn’t it?—that no one but the historians seems to know that a hundred years ago it didn’t exist.” (Stephen King, p. 363)*

The quote explains that there was another plague that ravaged America as well towards the end of the 14th century, namely a pandemic called the Black Death (Pes Bubo) or Black Death which ravaged Europe, Asia, and North Africa between 1347 and 1353. The term "Black Death" refers on signs and symptoms of the disease, which usually manifests as dark skin on the fingers, toes, or the tip of the nose from dead tissue.

## 2. Loneliness and Despair

Despair, or hopelessness, is often the result of deep internal or external conflict. King's characters are often faced with overwhelming challenges, and despair arises when they feel unable to overcome or change their fate. When people face big problems and lose hope, they are said to be hopeless because they are not ready to accept their current predicament (Wedda, 2023). And loneliness is a condition where people do not have the desired social life in their environment. The following are quotes that discuss despair to loneliness.

*“She was not above feeling fear for herself, and for one instant she felt this strange woman with the white in her hair would reach out, almost casually, and snap her neck. For the one instant the feeling held, Mother Abigail actually fancied that the woman’s face was gone and she was looking into a hole in time and space, a hole from which two eyes, dark and damned, stared out at her — eyes that were lost and haggard and hopeless” (Stephen King, p.687).*

This quote explains about the despair experienced by a woman was seen by Abigail's mother, where her eyes, which looked dark, haggard, and stared blankly at her, looked very desperate. There was also a look of despair on her face, or absent, languid, and somber. Surely feelings of hopelessness or loneliness are present in her.

*“Even the company of the mad was better than the company of the dead.” (Stephen King, p. 301).*

This quote explain then Lloyd shouted asking if anyone was there, in fact no one greeted him, and thought that it would be better if many people, even though they were insane, than feeling lonely, no one and only among the crowds of people died because of the plague.

*“If we don’t have each other, we go crazy with loneliness. When we do, we go crazy with togetherness.” (Stephen King, p. 481).*

As in this quote, Peplau & Perlman (1998) claim that loneliness is an unpleasant subjective feeling that occurs when a person experiences a decrease in both the quantity and quality of his social relationships. It is only when feelings become overwhelming, drain the mind and body, and interfere with daily life that they become an indication of illness. It's normal to feel lonely, but it can also drive people crazy when they don't have each other.

*“She paused at the edge of the sand, feeling the good heat baking the soles of her feet even through the rubber thongs. The silhouette at the far end of the pier was still tossing small rocks into the water. Her thought was partly amusing but mostly dismaying. He knows what he looks like out there, she thought. Lord Byron, lonely but unafraid. Sitting in lonely solitude and surveying the sea which leads back, back to where England lies. But I, an exile, may never—Oh balls! It wasn’t so much the thought that disturbed her as what it indicated about her own state of mind. “ (Stephen King, p. 28)*

In the quote, Lord Byron does not feel afraid in the midst of the influenza pandemic he is facing, it's just that he is lonely, alone, because many people have already left. Lord Byron felt lonely as mentioned in the above quote, his mind was mostly anxious. But it wasn't the thoughts that bothered him, but something interesting about his own state of mind.

*“So why was he feeling so bad, anyway? He was telling the truth, wasn’t he? Yes. And the worst of the truth was that he felt relief, wasn’t it? That the stone around his neck was gone? No, the worst is being alone. Being lonely. Corny but true. He wanted someone to share this view with. Someone he could turn to and say with modest wit: On a clear day you can see forever. And the only company was in a tent a mile and a half back with a mouthful of green puke. Getting stiff. Drawing flies.” (Stephen King, p. 404)*

In situations like this, as in the quote in this novel that the worst thing is actually being alone, lonely. This condition is quite a hard thing to experience during a pandemic, various challenges can occur in the midst of loneliness. Loneliness is a condition where a person feels empty, alone, and unwanted. Yes, like the quote above that being alone is a bad situation.

### 3. Society

In general, the definition of society is a group of individuals who live together, work together to obtain common interests that already have an order of life, norms and customs that are adhered to in their environment (Faruk, 2016). This novel also discusses society or society where the advantages and disadvantages of life lived in society at that era, the perspective of society, as quoted below.

*“Who gets to be best-liked in any community? Who is the most trusted? Why, the man who does the dirty job, of course, and does it with a smile. The man who does the job you couldn't bring yourself to do. “It”'s going to be like burying cordwood,” Chad told them. “If you can keep it on that level in your mind, you”'ll be okay. Some of you may have to vomit here at the start. There”'s no shame in that; just try to go someplace where the rest won”'t have to look at you do it. Once you”'ve puked, you”'ll find it easier to think that way: cordwood. Nothing but cordwood.”” (Stephen King, p. 829)*

In society, it's difficult to socialize and live side by side with other people, feeling like vomiting and tired, we just don't need to do what we want in front of people, so we can socialize again and adapt to the environment, which means we need to get out from your own zone.

The dirty job in this novel is most liked by any community, but this dirty work would not feel shameful if you think of it as burying firewood, of course it would disappear, just like being consumed by fire.

*“Show me a man or a woman alone and I'll show you a saint. Give me two and they'll fall in love. Give me three and they'll invent the charming thing we call 'society'. Give me four and they'll build a pyramid. Give me five and they'll make one an outcast. Give me six and they'll reinvent prejudice. Give me seven and in seven years they'll reinvent warfare. Man may have been made in the image of God, but human society was made in the image of His opposite number, and is always trying to get back home.” (Stephen King, p. 409).*

Like the quote, based on religion, man was created in the image of God. However, on earth, society is created according to its opposite and seeks to return to its origins.

*“Actually, he said being in an upright position was probably better for her lungs and her bronchial tubes. He didn”'t say anything else, but Alberta Edmonton belongs to all the organizations Carla belongs to, so he didn”'t have to. Both of us knew she”'s been inviting something like this, Fran. She”'s president of the Town Historical Committee, she”'s spending twenty hours a week in the library, she”'s secretary of the Women”'s Club and the Lovers of Literature Club, she”'s been running the March of Dimes here in town since before Fred died, and last winter she took on the Heart Fund, for good measure. On top of all that she”'s been trying to drum up interest in a Southern Maine Genealogical Society. She”'s run down, worn out. And that”'s part of the reason she blew up at you. All Edmonton said was that she had the welcome mat out for the first evil germ that passed her way. That”'s all he*

*had to say. Frannie, she's getting old and she doesn't want to. She's been working harder than I have." (Stephen King, p. 188)*

The quote emphasizes "The Maine Genealogical Society (MGS)" is a non-profit charitable and educational organization. It was founded in 1976 to collect, exchange, preserve. This quote also makes it clear that Alberta Edmonton, president of the city's history committee, was trying to generate interest in the people of Southern Maine's Genealogy.

*"I actually think that's very possible. Not right away, because we're all too scattered. But man is a gregarious, social animal, and eventually we'll get back together, if only so we can tell each other stories about how we survived the great plague of 1990." (Stephen King, p. 366)*

The following quote explains that humans can easily make friends, and from this incident, they will easily make friends and tell each other about how they can survive this possibly deadly plague.

*"He glanced at the rifle again. He had flicked the safety because the fellow creatures might turn out to be like Elder. He had left the rifle leaning against the rock because he hoped they would be like Bateman—only not quite so glum about the future. Society will reappear, Bateman had said. Notice I didn't use the word "reform." That would have been a ghastly pun. There's precious little reform in the human race." (Stephen King, p. 409)*

Even though the pandemic has claimed many lives, almost 90% of the world's population, there will still be a society that is being re-formed. There are precious few reforms, not terrible reforms among mankind.

#### 4. Morals

Moral can be interpreted as a human guide to recognize danger, how to think about something, how to speak and how to live about things that are good and right or bad and wrong (Mulyono, 2022). Morals are a set of guidelines that encourage a person to lead a positive life and not offend others.

*"People who try hard to do the right thing always seem mad." (Stephen King, p. 847).*

In this quote, the Judge states that people, who do good things, will look crazy. There are many people who have gone the right way even though faced with a sad death but still chose the right path.

*"A person can't change all at once." (Stephen King, p. 707).*



As in the following quote, everyone's character is different and can change over time. So one cannot change all at once.

*"No one can tell what goes on in between the person you were and the person you become. No one can chart that blue and lonely section of hell. There are no maps of the change. You just come out the other side." (Stephen King, p. 471).*

Like the following quote, a person's personality cannot change all at once as described in the quote above, but there are still changes from bad to better, according to the conditions experienced, there will be a process of change, no one knows what will happen in the future, no anyone knows how our life used to be, maybe bad, and got better in the future.

*"She looks like the type that might freak out. It's something in the eyes, Frannie. It says if you shoot my sacred cows, I'll shoot yours." (Stephen King, p. 184).*

They have a baby and are still in the womb, but not ready for marriage, and thinking about where to take the baby, Frannie doesn't want to get married. However, in the novel it is quoted that her lover offends and disturbs her feelings, looks angry and disappointed because when the partner utters an offensive word it is no longer a partner. This quote shows a feeling of disappointment and anger even if it's only from the eyes.

*"I am, I am!" he said roughly. He looked suddenly distraught. "I'm an old man trying to give a young daughter advice, and it's like a monkey trying to teach table manners to a bear. A drunk driver took my son's life seventeen years ago and my wife has never been the same since. I've always seen the question of abortion in terms of Fred. I seem to be helpless to see it any other way, just as helpless as you were to stop your giggles when they came on you at that poetry reading, Frannie. Your mother would argue against it for all the standard reasons. Morality, she'd say. A morality that goes back two thousand years. The right to life. All our Western morality is based on that idea. I've read the philosophers. I range up and down them like a housewife with a dividend check in the Sears and Roebuck store. Your mother sticks with the Reader's Digest, but it's me that ends up arguing from feeling and her from the codes of morality." (Stephen King, p. 76).*

Western morality is characterized by an emphasis on rights of individuals. According to Dworkin (1977), all moral codes encapsulate personal rights, personal duties, and social goals, but they may differ in the priority given to these three categories. Frannie's parents may not agree to have an abortion, because everyone has the right to live.

## 5. Religion

A person's belief in a teaching that directs his life is the most fundamental religious concept in everyday life. Most people have their own ideas about how to live their life. Any belief will prevent people from acting morally in everyday interactions with other people.

*"He says ..."* Ralph cleared his throat; the feather stuck in the band of his hat jiggled. "He says that he don't believe in God." The message relayed, he looked unhappily down at his shoes and waited for the explosion. But she only chuckled, got up, and walked across to Nick. She took one of his hands and patted it. "Bless you, Nick, but that don't matter. He believes in you." (Stephen King, p. 541).

In this quote, feeling guilty and sad for not having faith in God. However, Abhigail's mother approaches and says it's okay, because God believes in them.

*"There's always a choice. That's God's way, always will be. Your will is still free. Do as you will. There's no set of leg-irons on you. But... this is what God wants of you."* (Stephen King, p. 966).

This quote explains then people think that there is no way or choice, but that is God's way, there is nothing that humans know because it is according to what God wants.

*"Every man or woman who loves Him, they hate Him too, because He's a hard God, a jealous God, He Is, what He Is, and in this world He's apt to repay service with pain while those who do evil ride over the roads in Cadillac cars. Even the joy of serving Him is a bitter joy."* (Stephen King, p. 547)

This quote explains that God is a jealous God, because what we do should be for Him. Problems are given to make humans who have been far from Him able to return to Him, even though the pain they experience. That's God's way.

*"The beauty of religious mania is that it has the power to explain everything. Once God (or Satan) is accepted as the first cause of everything which happens in the mortal world, nothing is left to chance...logic can be happily tossed out the window."* (Stephen King, p. 644)

This quote explains that nothing is accidental in the world, because religiously we have a place to replenish our strength. Everything that happens in the world, some are from God and maybe some are from satan. That's just how we handle it. We can choose to have views about believing in right or wrong and even think on the positive or negative side of this situation.

*"The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want for nothing. He makes me lie down in the green pastures. He greases up my head with oil. He gives me kung-fu in the face of my enemies. Amen"* (Stephen King, p. 1069)

In this quote, Stephen King takes a quote from the Bible, namely Psalm 23:1-2. That God is a shepherd who guides His sheep to be able to walk through problems calmly with Him.

By looking at the Bible figures above, it can be interpreted that the pastor is a person entrusted by God in educating, guiding, teaching and bringing the congregation to the introduction of God's Word which leads to one goal, namely growth towards Him perfectly. In

this situation, whatever circumstances a person faces, God will guide them to a better direction in His way.

## CONCLUSION

This research discusses how the social situation that occurred in the novel “The Stand” during an influenza pandemic was developed as a biological weapon in a secret laboratory of the US Department of Defense in northern California. The Stand tells the story of a highly contagious and deadly pandemic strain of influenza developed as a biological weapon in a secret US Department of Defense laboratory in northern California. In the past, influenza was a global pandemic that affected everyone. This novel, mentions a deadly pandemic, influenza or superflu, spreading quickly to all countries and almost killing the entire world population. This virus accidentally spread because security guard Charles Champion fled knowing the laboratory would be locked, he wanted to take his family away from the area. Faced with various challenges, loneliness, and despair in the midst of a pandemic that has claimed many of the closest victims, to the choice to choose a bright life or a dark life. Discusses the Influenza flu pandemic that almost claimed the entire population in the world, about how those who are still alive survive until this pandemic problem is over, face loneliness, despair, belief, and responsibility.

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